
A Parade of Voices

[Click here for the podcast](#)

The Rev. Canon George M. Maxwell, Jr.
The Cathedral of St. Philip
Atlanta, Georgia
March 28, 2010
Palm Sunday - Year C

I love parades.

No matter where we are, they promise to move us to a better place.

Our Palm Sunday Procession is no exception.

You can feel the excitement in the air.

The cool morning promises to yield to a warmer afternoon. The cherry trees are in bloom. The dogwoods and azaleas can't be far behind.

It won't be long now before balls are sailing over the fence at Turner Field and dropping into the cup around Amen Corner.

You can hear the excitement in the voices.

"Blessed is the One who comes in the Name of the Lord. Hosanna in the highest."

"Hosanna," "Peace in Heaven," "Glory in the Highest."

It's the expectation of new life.

Bring on the new fire. Bring on the lilies. Bring on the timpani.

I can hear the first words of my parents on Easter morning.

"Alleluia. Christ is risen."

I learned the answer at an early age.

"The Lord is risen indeed. Alleluia."

So, why stop now? Why do we have to lower our voices and talk so much about the way that he died?

Hanging on a cross. Crying in pain. Looking like the victim of an old fashioned lynching.

It's brutal. It's crude. It's unseemly.

And, why do I have to shout "Crucify him?"

I'm tired of all of this. I want to forget about the cross.

Let's stick with the parables. Revealing stories of mustard seeds, rediscovered coins and valuable pearls.

Let's focus on the love stories. Inspiring examples of prodigal fathers, self-aware mothers and good Samaritans.

Let's make Easter more like Christmas. More beauty and less blood. More wonder and less death. It's what Christ wanted. It's how he lived.

It's an inspiring story. One that I can tell my children, without having to worry about what kinds of questions they are going to ask.

And, let's stop talking about sacrifice. It sounds empty. Maybe even evil. Eating flesh. Drinking blood. It's not an altar. It's a table. God desires mercy, not sacrifice. Jesus said so.

But, then, I hear those other voices.

I hear the psalmists, and I begin to worry about the new student who is forced to sit at the lunch table by herself.

I hear Abel, Isaac and Joseph, and I remember how much I like the way that things are .

I hear Job, and I look again at the one who I thought brought it all on himself.

I hear Caiaphas, and I wonder what I would be willing to do to keep the peace.

I hear Jesus, and I realize that I can never forget about the way that he died.

It is what gives me life.

I see that he wasn't the only one. There are so many others. I can begin to see them now.

They're all different, but in the same way. They can't defend themselves. And, the law won't save them. Their guilt doesn't seem to need any proof.

It's the cross that opens my ears. It carries those voices above the condemning noise that the crowd always makes.

And, it's the cross that won't let me forget what I heard.

There's always a reason to forget. Always a cover story good enough.

No, I can never forget about the way that he died. It's what keeps me from turning the story of Jesus into just another fairy tale.

I can't forget about the way that he died. It's the only way that I can remember the way that he lived.

AMEN.

Comments? Contact The Rev. Canon George M. Maxwell, Jr. at: gmaxwell@stphilipscathedral.org